Introduction

'Shakespeare tells the actor when to go fast and when to go slow; when to come in on cue, and when to accent a particular word or series of words.'[1] This is Peter Hall's opening assertion in the first section of his recent book, *Shakespeare's Advice to the Players*. In the last twenty years, a number of eminent British directors and voice practitioners, including John Barton, Declan Donnellan, Peter Hall, Cicely Berry and Patsy Rodenburg, have published handbooks designed to provide actors with guidance on performing Shakespearean drama.[2] As practitioners within some of the country's major theatre companies – notably the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) and National Theatre – they have been extremely influential in the establishment of principles of Shakespearean verse speaking on the modern British stage. Hall's assertion, cited above, is typical of claims made in these theatrical handbooks about the necessity for actors to identify and follow the authorial 'stage directions' encoded in the structure of the text. Barton similarly begins his first chapter with the assertion that 'in the Elizabethan theatre the actors knew how to use and interpret the *hidden direction* Shakespeare himself provided in his verse and his prose',[3] and his book is aimed at helping modern actors to achieve this end.

The focus on authorial clues to interpretation in the structure of the language is part of a wider concern with 'authenticity' in current productions of Shakespeare. A similar movement is increasingly apparent in consideration of theatrical space and the relationship between actor and audience. RSC associate designer Tom Piper notes that 'over the last fifteen years there has been a move away from large scale, highly visually theatrical versions of Shakespeare's plays – perhaps in part influenced by the Swan and the Globe theatres – towards an emphasis on the power of language to excite our imagination' and an increasing emphasis on creating 'a focused, more intimate relationship between the actor and audience'.[4] Since the completion of the reconstructed Globe Theatre in 1997, this movement has manifested itself in the building of the new Rose Theatre in Kingston,

based on the ground-plan of the 1587 Rose Theatre in Southwark; the RSC's planned redevelopment of the main house in Stratford into an auditorium based on an Elizabethan courtyard theatre; the building of a replica of the Blackfriars Theatre at Staunton, Virginia, where a Globe replica is mooted for the near future; and the planned reconstruction of the Rose Theatre at Lennox, Massachusetts.

Attempts at creating and advertising 'authenticity' in Shakespearean production have been a common feature of the presentation of the plays since the Restoration. The Interregnum resulted in a break with early modern theatrical traditions, which theatre directors have sought variously to recapture. In 1977, J. L. Styan identified what he described as 'The Shakespeare Revolution', a significant move towards 'authenticity' in the texts and staging of Shakespearean productions, which occurred at the beginning of the twentieth century, led by William Poel and Harley Granville-Barker.[5] Although elements of the work of Poel and Granville-Barker continued to influence approaches to textual fidelity and verse speaking into the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, the 1970s onwards saw an increasing vogue for 'interpretative' productions, characterised by overarching directorial concepts, and frequently employing elaborate, mechanical sets. In recent years, it has been possible to discern a reaction against this concept-led, technically complex mode of presenting Shakespeare, and a move, once again, towards seeking out styles of production that have a greater affinity to those of Shakespeare's own period.

This book is concerned with the analysis of contemporary responses to the Shakespearean text, as evidenced in performance practice and drama training. Through examination of published accounts and interview material from leading actors and directors, it explores current approaches to Shakespearean verse speaking in rehearsal rooms, drama schools and university drama departments. By examining assertions made in the theatrical handbooks against the findings of Renaissance scholarship, I contest some of the claims made by leading theatre practitioners and reiterated by actors and students looking for guidance in speaking Shakespearean verse.

In examining theatrical practice, I consider the texts used by directors and actors in the rehearsal room, and the way in which the layout of these texts may influence their interpretation. I explore the potential impact of varying editorial principles of lineation and punctuation on theatrical delivery, with the aim of alerting editors to the way in which actors may interpret editorial emendations, and theatre practitioners to diverse editorial and compositorial methods. Modern editors vary significantly in their attitudes to lineation and punctuation as indicators of meaning in the Shakespearean text. The

editorial perception of the dramatic significance of the structural properties of the text, in particular of line division, is one that I explore and occasionally question with reference to theatrical documents and evidence about acting practice from the Renaissance theatre. I also examine the origins of the early printed texts in order to make apparent the effect of textual transmission and compositorial and scribal intervention on lineation and punctuation.

I do not seek to criticise attempts to claim authorial indications about dramatic delivery in the structure of the verse, since clearly the text and its form are the main tools of the Shakespearean actor and director. My argument is, however, that if theatre practitioners are to make such claims, it is essential that they have a sound historical and textual basis from which to do so. I therefore interrogate their claims through reference to Renaissance verse, prosodic treatises and theatrical documents. Through close analysis of a number of the plays, I investigate the patterns and variations in the use of particular metrical structures across the length and genres of the Shakespeare canon, with the aim of providing a greater understanding of the relationship between verse structure and meaning in Shakespeare's plays.

This book challenges fixed ideas and argues the need for a more informed and open theatrical engagement with the Shakespearean text and a greater understanding amongst actors of editorial principles of lineation and punctuation, and amongst editors of the way in which elements of their work are being interpreted in performance. Drawing on the work of a large number of scholars, from a wide range of sources, I offer a new synthesis that is both scholarly viable and open to exploration in the rehearsal room.

The theatrical handbooks and work of the directors and voice practitioners whose methods form the basis of the discussion in the first chapter are admirable in their attempts to encourage actors to engage with the structure of Shakespeare's language and its dramatic properties. However, whilst some of the approaches advocated make both dramatic and historical sense, others, particularly in claims made about the dramatic function of metre and lineation, are in direct conflict with evidence relating to Renaissance theatre practice and the context of metrical structures in the work of Shakespeare and his contemporaries.

The issue of lineation has assumed a key role in discussions of Shakespearean acting, as is evidenced by the substantial space afforded it in the theatrical handbooks. Shared lines, short verse-lines and the correlation or conflict between verse-line and phrase, are viewed as Shakespeare's 'stage directions' to actors. They are claimed as indicators of pace of

delivery, pause, emotion and the nature of inter-character relationships. Peter Hall, in *Exposed by the Mask*, describes the lineation – 'where the end of the line is, and where a half-line meets another half-line' – as 'absolutely crucial to the rhythm and thus the understanding of the scene'.[6]

Reading actress Juliet Stevenson's account in Carol Rutter's *Clamorous Voices* of preparing for her acclaimed performance as Isabella in *Measure for Measure* at the RSC in 1983,[7] one might expect to find an in-depth discussion of Isabella's character and her relationship with others. Instead, we find a detailed analysis of the metre and phrasing of Isabella's scenes, elements on which Stevenson claims to have based her interpretation:

> I am a bit of a purist about the structure of Shakespeare's language. His metre – that basic ten-syllable iambic pentameter line – his rhythms, his pauses, his punctuation, where he breaks a line mid-way, you have to observe what he's doing with them, not as an end in itself but because they give you so many clues. There is a beat, there is a pulse in the verse that will tell you as much about the character as anything she says. [8]

The lineation of verse is clearly a vital element in its delivery, being the feature that essentially distinguishes the medium from prose. Intimately related to the issue of lineation is that of punctuation, and the extent to which actors are encouraged to observe the verse-line or the grammatical phrase as the main guide to breathing and pausing. Whilst elements such as attention to alliteration, assonance, monosyllabic lines and imagery are also discussed by directors and voice practitioners, these are areas which are neither particular to verse nor subject to disagreement in relation to their function. By contrast, lineation – the extent to which it functions as a central guiding force for an actor's delivery of the verse, and its relationship to the grammatical structure of the lines – is an area of continuous discussion. It has thus proved to be a significant site for exploring the relationship between text, language and performance.

My explorations make clear the tendency of theatre practitioners to assert 'rules' about the delivery and dramatic function of particular metrical structures. Frequently in the handbooks, a few specific examples are presented as indicative of a universally applicable method of delivery, and speculation, not always informed by historical and textual evidence, is presented as fact. Handbooks can quickly become 'rule'-books, and the theories accepted without question by actors keen to receive straightforward guidance on speaking Shakespearean verse. My analysis of the structure of Shakespeare's verse at different periods of his writing career makes a claim for the need for a more open and textually informed theatrical engagement

with the Shakespearean text. A contributory factor here is a failure fully to acknowledge or understand the origins of the texts used in rehearsal. Practitioners are frequently led into basing interpretative decisions on lineation and punctuation that have arisen out of compositorial or scribal interpolation or error, or from modern editorial emendation.

In chapter 1 I investigate the theories about Shakespearean verse speaking which have been advocated by leading theatre practitioners over the past twenty years, and put into practice on the British stage. I concentrate principally on the work of the RSC, National and Shakespeare's Globe, these being the British theatres most frequently responsible for Shakespearean production and from which the most prominent handbooks on Shakespearean acting have derived. These publications and the practical work of practitioners from these institutions have had a profound influence on the wider dissemination of ideas within the theatrical profession. Examining published accounts, interviews, rehearsal diaries and anecdotal evidence for areas of similarity and conflict, I attempt to establish the basis for the theories and to explore the way in which ideas have been transmitted and transmuted as a result of their contact with other areas of theatrical and critical practice. My aim is partly to identify common theories that have arisen about the dramatic function of lineation and punctuation, but also to note the divergences in attitudes that have resulted from the various training, study and theatrical experiences of these practitioners. I examine the theatrical tendency to establish 'rules' about the delivery of particular metrical structures and argue that this does not take account of authorial inconsistency and prosodic development and may obscure ambiguities inherent in the verse structure.

In the second chapter, I focus on modern theatrical interaction with early printed and modern edited texts. The texts used in rehearsal rooms and in the examples cited by practitioners in their handbooks vary. In noting the texts used for particular productions and publications, I observe instances where directors and actors confer authority on editorial decisions, making assertions about Shakespeare's dramatic intention based on lineation which may have derived from editorial perceptions of metrical precedent rather than concern for its dramatic significance, and punctuation based on a modern grammatical as opposed to an early modern rhetorical system. I examine variations in the lineation of ambiguous passages and consider the potential influence of editorial choices on acting decisions about pace, pause, mood, character motivation and interaction. An acknowledgment of the extent of editorial re-lineation and re-punctuation has led some practitioners to refer to the Folio for authorial 'clues' to interpretation.

Given this increasing tendency, I examine the possible sources of corruption to lineation, punctuation and metre in the Folio.

Substantial discussion has been devoted to editorial approaches to line-division and linking or retention of short lines, in articles such as Fredson Bowers' 'Establishing Shakespeare's Text: Notes on Short Lines and the Problem of Verse Division'[9] and Paul Werstine's 'Line Division in Shakespeare's Verse: An Editorial Problem',[10] accounts of editorial principles such as those of the Oxford *Complete Works*, published in *William Shakespeare: A Textual Companion*,[11] and in the prefatory and appended material to individual editions. However, these accounts do not engage with the implications of editorial decisions on theatrical interpretation. Editorial decisions about lineation and punctuation are frequently made for the convenience of the reader: assisting cross-referencing between editions and critical works, and aiding understanding through the application of modern grammatical principles. However, given the fact that these editions are frequently used in the theatre, it seems vital to alert editors to the way in which their decisions may be interpreted by actors. I suggest that there is scope for a 'theatrical' text, for use in the rehearsal room, which makes apparent the unambiguous metrical connection between certain lines, emends obvious errors, and modernises spelling for ease of use, whilst not obscuring ambiguities inherent in the lineation and punctuation.

In order to place Shakespeare's use of lineation and punctuation within a wider context, I explore, in chapter 3, Renaissance pedagogical treatises and prosodic criticism and classical and vernacular dramatic and non-dramatic verse. My exploration encompasses wider theories of prosody and possible direct influences on Shakespeare's writing. I consider the factors which may have influenced Shakespeare and his contemporaries' attitudes to verse – its structure, expressive potential and demands of delivery. I explore what Renaissance actors and writers might have been taught about the composition and delivery of verse in the schoolroom, and examine classical and Renaissance works of literature and literary criticism, which may have had an impact on Shakespeare's prosody. Particular attention is given to the relationship between the verse-line and grammatical phrase and use of shared and short lines and consideration of their employment as an expressive tool or as a method of directing actors in their delivery. In assessing whether elements of the lineation and punctuation might have been designed as a form of 'stage direction' for the actor, I examine what can be ascertained about the working practices of the Renaissance theatre, in particular the distribution of individual parts and limited rehearsal time. Renaissance actors' parts provide an instructive means with which to explore the extent to which

the metrical structure of a scene would have been visible to an actor in possession of only his lines and a brief cue. I consider the implications of part-based study of a role on the delivery of shared lines and various types of short line – internal, initial, final and single. I also examine the lineation and punctuation of extant theatrical promptbooks and actors' parts, looking at Renaissance theatrical manuscripts, including the portion of *The Booke of Sir Thomas More* widely considered to be in Shakespeare's hand. In this chapter I draw extensively on Simon Palfrey and Tiffany Stern's recent book on actors' parts in the Renaissance – *Shakespeare in Parts*.[12]

In chapter 4, I move to an examination of the internal evidence for Shakespeare's perception and use of lineation and punctuation – the plays themselves. My aim is to explore and, in some cases, challenge assertions and assumptions made by theatre practitioners and editors. In order to establish generic patterns and chart the development in Shakespeare's use of shared and short lines and end-stopping and enjambment, I look at plays spanning the duration and genres of Shakespeare's career: *Richard II, Romeo and Juliet* and *The Merchant of Venice* as examples of Shakespeare's early work; *Measure for Measure, Hamlet* and *Troilus and Cressida* as examples of early seventeenth-century plays; and *The Winter's Tale*, *Coriolanus* and *The Tempest* as examples of his later work. I look both at the incidence of various types of metrical structure, and the way in which these relate to the subject matter of scenes, in particular the possible dramatic functions of metrical irregularity and its potential to reflect a character's emotional or mental state. I work from the versions of the text considered to be closest to Shakespeare's authorial manuscript since these provide the most authoritative witnesses to authorial punctuation and lineation. As an authority for the provenance of the various texts, I refer to Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor's *William Shakespeare: A Textual Companion*, which provides a detailed and comprehensive analysis of the early printed texts.[13]

In chapter 5, I draw on the discussion about the use of particular texts in the modern rehearsal room, and the tendency for theatre practitioners to confer authority on modern edited or early printed texts, to suggest ways in which the ideas presented in this book might be applied practically. I discuss a possible layout for a 'theatrical' text, which could assist actors in their perception of the metrical structure whilst not obscuring textual ambiguities. An edited version of *Measure for Measure* 2.2 in the Appendix illustrates my suggestions, alongside which I note the variations in lineation of this scene in modern editions and the possible effect of editorial decisions on dramatic interpretation of the scene.

CHAPTER 1

Current theatrical theories and practice regarding Shakespearean verse speaking

As discussed in the Introduction, the practitioners whose work forms the basis of the discussion in this first chapter have had a significant influence on Shakespeare production in Britain in the last two decades. In this chapter, I explore the theories and methods that have been put into practice at prominent British theatres over this time, many of which derive from the published handbooks and first-hand work of these influential practitioners.

Peter Hall, former Artistic Director of the RSC and the National, and Artistic Director of The Peter Hall Company since 1988, claims to have worked with 'nearly every major Shakespearean actor',[1] many of whom attest to his influence on their working practices. John Barton worked alongside Hall at the RSC as Associate Director and advisor on verse speaking and continues to run workshops for the company. *Playing Shakespeare* is a transcript of a television series of the same name, in which Barton worked with leading British actors on speaking the Shakespearean text. Although Hall and Barton are no longer resident at the RSC, their influence on the work of their successors is apparent. Michael Boyd, its current Artistic Director, speaks of the 'living tradition … shaped by Peter Hall's insights about rhetoric' and 'John Barton's understanding of Renaissance verse patterns' as a 'necessary' element of the company's continuing work.[2] Barton's work has also influenced that of Tim Carroll, Associate Director of Shakespeare's Globe Theatre (2003–5). Asked whether he could cite any major influences on his approach to directing Shakespeare, Carroll replied, 'Yes, it's very easily traceable – John Barton, the *Playing Shakespeare* Series – that's why I'm a director.'[3]

Cicely Berry has worked in the voice department of the RSC since the early 1970s, moving from Head of the Voice Department to 'Voice Director', in which role she continues to work with actors both in workshops and in the rehearsal room. Adrian Noble, Artistic Director of the RSC from 1991 to 2003, describes Berry as 'one of the most influential figures not only at the RSC … but in world theatre'.[4] Peter Holland notes that 'even in

productions by directors barely interested in the details of Shakespearean language, Berry's status within the company as a cross between coach and first-aider, ensured that her principles of work continued to exemplify the RSC style'.[5] At the National, a similar continuity has been evident in the work of Patsy Rodenburg, Berry's former pupil and colleague at the RSC for nine years, who has been Head of Voice throughout the reign of Hall's successors, Richard Eyre, Trevor Nunn and Nicholas Hytner. The inside cover of her book, *The Actor Speaks*, which Judi Dench describes as 'a Bible',[6] has comments from numerous actors, citing the impact of her teaching on their work.

Declan Donnellan is the founder and Artistic Director of Cheek by Jowl and an associate director of the National Theatre. In 2002 he was responsible for running the RSC Academy, established to provide training for a new generation of actors. His book, *The Actor and the Target*, which emerged out of Donnellan's work with actors and students in Russia, contains a substantial section on approaches to the Shakespearean text. It has been published in English, Russian, French, Italian and Spanish, disseminating Donnellan's ideas to students of acting throughout Europe and America.[7]

Arriving in Stratford-upon-Avon in 1956, Hall encountered a clash of theatrical traditions, which manifested itself broadly in 'three kinds of actor' who inhabited its stages at this time: 'a few old boys from the past who boomed and bellowed their sonorous generalities', 'the men of the '30s, bred on Maugham, Coward and Rattigan', who 'threw their lines away with studied nonchalance and always wanted to appear "real" ' and the young 'Method based' actors who had 'little ability to speak Shakespeare'.[8] Hall felt that Stratford needed a unity of style,[9] which he set out to create, and successfully achieved. In 1962, Kenneth Tynan commented that 'Hall's troupe has developed, uniquely in Britain, a classical style of its own … cogent deliberate verse speaking that discards melodic cadenzas in favour of meaning and motivation'.[10]

The lack of familiarity amongst young actors with performing Shakespeare, which Hall encountered at the RSC in the 1950s and 1960s, was partly the result of the decline of repertory theatre in Britain, and was to become increasingly common due to minimal funding for regional and touring theatre and a rise in television drama from its 'com[ing] of age' in the 1960s.[11] As Rodenburg notes, in the past the techniques of Shakespearean verse speaking were 'passed on by older actors to younger actors, honed by constant practice and repetition'.[12] Today young actors are more likely to have served an apprenticeship in television drama before

tackling Shakespearean texts. Actors habitually working in regional or touring theatre can similarly be expected to have had little contact with Shakespeare's work. As Holland explains, by the late 1980s 'the sheer cost of touring with a large enough company to play Shakespeare allowed most groups to explore the possibility only rarely'.[13]

The recognition of a widespread lack of experience in performing Shakespeare was undoubtedly one of the motivations for the publication of handbooks aimed at teaching the skills of verse speaking. Through publication of the methods that they were putting into practice at the RSC and National, these leading directors and voice practitioners were able to extend the influence of their work beyond these major theatrical institutions, providing simple advice for actors who did not have the benefit of learning their techniques first-hand. The overwhelming and continuing popularity of these books indicates the readiness with which actors have accepted such advice.

The expansion of drama school training in the twentieth century also created an increasing market for acting handbooks. The National Council for Drama Training was established in 1976, since which time twenty-one drama schools have received its accreditation. The theatrical handbooks cited above are on a number of the drama school curricula, and the practitioners themselves have regular contact with some schools. Patsy Rodenburg is Head of Voice at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, and both she and Cicely Berry are currently on the list of guest lecturers at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA) and the Central School of Speech and Drama (Central), where their ideas and techniques are passed on to new generations of actors. My training at LAMDA in the 1990s exposed me to many of the theories put forward in the books, which I, along with my contemporaries, absorbed and applied enthusiastically.

Two further books, published since 1990, which provide an indication of the continuing market for guidance on Shakespearean acting, and illustrate the wider dissemination of theory and practice, are Kristin Linklater's *Freeing Shakespeare's Voice* and Patrick Tucker's *Secrets of Acting Shakespeare*. Primarily working in America, where she claims to have trained teachers 'who teach in a majority of the actor-training programs in the U.S.',[14] Linklater also taught voice work for six years at LAMDA and continues to lecture throughout Europe. Patrick Tucker, Barton's Assistant Director at the RSC in the 1960s, set up the Original Shakespeare Company, which put on single performances at various venues, including Shakespeare's Globe Theatre between 1995 and 1999, and at theatre festivals around the world.